

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 DHA-02 PM-04 NSC-05
SP-02 SS-15 L-03 H-01 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-07
NSAE-00 /055 W
-----251444Z 038539 /42

R 251227Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9252

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E.O. 11652:GDS
TAGS: PFOR, US, MA, CASC, (LAPPEMAN, EDMOND H.)
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH MINISTER OF INTERIOR; LAPPEMAN CASE

REFS: A) ANTANANARIVO 0784 B) ANTANANARIVO 0757

1. I WAS RECEIVED TODAY BY THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR IN ACCORDANCE WITH A REQUEST WHICH I HAD PLACED WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY SEVERAL WEEKS AGO (REF B). THE MINISTER, AMPY PORTOS, IS A LARGE PHYSICALLY IMPRESSIVE MAN OF OBVIOUS INTELLIGENCE. HE RECEIVED ME CORDIALLY, APOLOGIZING FOR THE FACT THAT THE PRESENT ACTIVE POLITICAL SITUATION HAD PREVENTED HIM FROM RECEIVING ME EARLIER. HE SAID THAT WHILE HE REALIZED THAT THIS WAS A COURTESY VISIT SUCH AS IS MADE TO ALL MINISTERS BY FOREIGN CHIEFS OF MISSION, HE NEVERTHELESS WANTED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT TO DESCRIBE FOR ME THE PRESENT INTERNAL ACTIVITIES OF THE MALAGASY GOVERNMENT AND TO SPEAK ABOUT THE LAPPEMAN CASE, OR AS HE PUT IT, "THE THREE SOUTH AFRICANS, ONE OF WHOM IS AN AMERICAN CITIZEN".

2. ON INTERNAL MALAGASY MATTERS AMPY PORTOS WENT THROUGH THE USUAL EXPLANATION OF THE NEW SYSTEM OF DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM EXPLAINING ALL THE ADMINISTRATIVE WORK NECESSARY TO CONDUCT THE LARGE NUMBER OF ELECTIONS REQUIRED, FOR WHICH HE WAS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE, AND TO EDUCATE THE POPULATION

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IN THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE NEW SYSTEM. SURPRISINGLY TO ME HE LAID EMPHASIS ON THREE DIFFICULTIES OR WEAK POINTS OF THE PRESENT INTERNAL SITUATION. HE SAID THAT THE NATIONALIZATIONS WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE HAD PRODUCED A SITUATION WHICH COULD BE SAID TO RESEMBLE "STATE CAPITALISM" BUT THAT THIS WAS A NECESSARY STEP TOWARD A MORE EGALITARIAN SOCIETY. HE ALSO ADMITTED THAT THE PRESENT PROCESS OF

REORGANIZATION IN THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FIELDS HAD CAUSED SOME ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, BUT COMMENTED THAT THESE WERE AN INEVITABLE OBSTACLE TO PROGRESS WHICH HAD TO BE OVERCOME. LASTLY, HE CITED ARTICLE 16 OF THE CONSTITUTION WHICH PERMITS THE GOVERNMENT TO ABROGATE THE RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES OF ANYONE WHO OPPOSED THE REVOLUTION. AMPY PORTOS SAID THAT WHILE THIS WAS OBVIOUSLY A SEVERE MEASURE, AGAIN IT WAS A NECESSARY STEP TO BUILD A SOCIETY IN WHICH THERE WOULD BE NO CLASSES AND EXPLOITATION OF MAN BY MAN.

3. ON THE LAPPEMAN CASE, THE MINISTER SHOWED ME A LETTER WRITTEN IN ENGLISH BY THE IMPRISONED WIFE OF A MALAGASY HOLDUP MAN WHO IS STILL AT LARGE. THE LETTER WAS ADDRESSED, DEAR FRIEND, AND THE AUTHOR HAD TRIED TO SMUGGLE IT TO THE IMPRISONED SOUTH AFRICANS. THE LETTER SAID THAT AT HER HUSBAND'S REQUEST THE WRITER WAS REQUESTING THE ADDRESSEE TO CONTACT HIS EMBASSY AND OBTAIN SOME MONEY WHICH WOULD BE USED TO OBTAIN THE FREEDOM OF ALL OF THEM, INCLUDING THE WRITER. THE MINISTER SAID HE WANTED ME TO KNOW ABOUT THIS AND SAID THAT HE HAD OF COURSE TAKEN ALL NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS TO PREVENT ANY ESCAPE ATTEMPT, EVEN THOUGH THE LEHTER MIGHT BE JUST AN ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN MONEY.

4. I TOLD THE MINISTER THAT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY WAS CONCERNED ONLY WITH THE FATE OF LAPPEMAN AND THAT WE HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY REQUESTS FOR FUNDS. AS FAR AS WE KNEW LAPPEMAN HAD ACCESS TO FUNDS SUFFICIENT FOR HIS DAILY MEALS AND OTHER AMENITIES. I TOLD THE MINISTER THAT LAPPEMAN HAD

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INFORMED US ON ONE OF OUR VISITS THAT HE HAD HEARD THAT THE TWO SOUTH AFRICANS WERE THINKING OF AN ESCAPE ATTEMPT, BUT THAT HE HAD NOT WANTED TO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT. THE MINISTER SEEMED GRATIFIED TO HAVE THIS INFORMATION AS TO LAPPEMAN'S POSITION.

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5. I THEN TOLD THE MINISTER THAT THE EMBASSY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRACTICE OF ALL AMERICAN MISSIONS ABROAD, WAS ONLY INTERESTED IN OBTAINING SPEEDY AND IMPARTIAL JUSTICE FOR IMPRISONED AMERICAN CITIZENS. IN THE CASE OF LAPPEMAN IT WAS A MATTER OF CONCERN TO US THAT HE HAD NOW BEEN IMPRISONED FOR FOUR MONTHS AND NO RESOLUTION OF HIS CASE SEEMED IMMINENT. IT WAS ALSO OUR HOPE THAT HIS AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP AND HIS SOUTH AFRICAN TIES WOULD NOT BE HELD AGAINST HIM.

6. THE MINISTER ACKNOWLEDGED THIS BUT THEN WENT INTO AN EXPLANATION CONCERNING MALAGASY SUSPICIONS ABOUT THE MOVEMENTS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN AIRCRAFT. HE SAID THAT CONTRARY TO THE PILOT'S DECLARATION THE AIRCRAFT HAD NOT FLOWN AROUND THE SOUTHERN TIP OF MADAGASCAR AFTER IT HAD BEEN REFUSED OVERFLIGHT AUTHORIZATION. FURTHERMORE, IT WAS THE MALAGASY CONCLUSION THAT THE PILOT HAD ALWAYS INTENDED TO OVERFLY MALAGASY TERRITORY WHETHER AUTHORIZED OR NOT. IN ADDITION, SUSPIEION HAD BEEN AROUSED WHEN DURING THEIR FIRST INTERROGATION THE SOUTH AFRICANS HAD NOT TOLD THE QUESTIONERS THAT THEY HAD STOPPED IN MANAKARA PRIOR TO LANDING AT MANANJARY, SOMETHING THE MALAGASY AUTHORITIES FOUND OUT LATER FROM THE MANAKARA AIRPORT.

7. I TOLD THE MINISTER THAT I WAS NOT FULLY INFORMED ON
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THE DETAILS OF THE CASE BUT THAT I DID NOT SEE WHY A PASSENGER ON THIS AIRCRAFT SHOULD SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR DECISIONS WHICH ONLY THE CAPTAIN OF THE AIRCRAFT CAN MAKE. I AM NOT SURE WHETHER THE MINISTER TOOK THIS IN, FOR JUST AS I FINISHED MAKING THIS STATEMENT WE WERE INTERRUPTED BY A PHONE CALL WHICH I UNDERSTOOD TO BE FROM CAPTAIN MARSAN, A MEMBER OF THE SUPREME REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL. HE SHOWED ANNOYANCE AT THE INTERRUPTION AND HAD A BRIEF EXCHANGE WITH HIS STAFF IN MALAGASY CONCERNING THE CALL, AFTER WHICH HE SEEMED ANXIOUS TO TERMINATE THE INTERVIEW. WE PARTED AFTER RECIPROCAL EXPRESSIONS OF COURTESY DURING WHICH I PRESENTED HIM WITH A COPY OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S NOTRE DAME SPEECH.

8. AS HAPPENED DURING MY CALL ON THE FOREIGN MINISTER
(REF A) AMPY PORTOS HAD A NOTE-TAKER PRESENT AND WENT
THROUGH HIS EXPOSITION OF THE MALAGASY GOVERNMENT'S
INTENTIONS IN A SYSTEMATIC MANNER, AS IF RECITING A LESSON.
I WILL BE CURIOUS TO SEE IF OTHER MINISTERS FOLLOW SUIT,
AS I HAVE NOW MADE TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY A BLANKET
REQUEST FOR COURTESY CALLS ON ALL MINISTERS, ALL MEMBERS OF
THE SUPREME REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL, THE PRIME MINISTER
AND THE PRESIDENT.

9. I WILL INFORM LAPPEMAN'S LAWYER SICARD OF THIS
CONVERSATION.BARRETT

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